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PRESS RELEASE

USAID ANNOUNCES THIRD YEAR OF COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

Ashgabat - October 16, 2007 – The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launches its third year of the Community Connections Program in Turkmenistan. This program offers 3-week practical training opportunities in the United States for professions from Turkmenistan. In 2008, three groups of professionals from Turkmenistan, consisting of representatives of the mass media, professionals in the field of tourism development, and infectious disease specialists, will travel to the United States for 3-week trainings.

The USAID Community Connections program provides an important opportunity for Americans and Turkmen to work together to address common professional challenges while expanding their social and cultural understanding. As professional communities of both countries rapidly become integrated, opportunities for positive relations between Americans and Turkmen are increasingly important.

During the first two years of the program, nine groups visited the U.S. on the Community Connections program. A total of 86 program participants represented the following professional areas: community activism, HIV/AIDS prevention, small business development, food processing, agricultural credit, maternal and child health, school management, and agricultural development. Participants gained professional experience from their U.S. colleagues and organizations, learned about life in the U.S. through cultural and social events and by living with hosting American families. "I am thankful to everyone involved in the program," said Gulya Muhamednazarova, who is planning to write two grant proposals, using the skills from the trip. Ms. Muhamednazarova participated in study tour for school managers.

The Community Connections program is one of the many programs supported by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). USAID programs support the country's community organizations, help agricultural enterprises to improve their productivity and competitiveness, and assist the Government of Turkmenistan in its efforts to adopt international health care practices.

The Community Connections program is implemented by the American Councils for International Education. Applications for the Community Connections program are available at American Councils office in Ashgabat and the American Corners in Mary, Turkmenabat, Dashoguz, and Turkmenbashi.

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